

# MOODS

Serving people with depression and manic depression, their families and friends since 1981

## Lecture: Depression and Humor—Is There Such a Thing?



### Elizabeth Swados

Obie-Award Winning Playwright, Guggenheim Fellow, and Author of the Acclaimed *My Depression: A Picture Book*  
January 10, 2006

While down in the depths of depression, it can be nearly impossible to see anything funny about the situation, but the multi-talented Elizabeth Swados somehow finds a way. In her touching, illustrated memoir, *My Depression: A Picture Book*, Swados offers up sharp, witty observations about her own, illness, likening her dark moods to everything from an evil twin to a *Creature from the Black Lagoon*-style entity. “Something slimy and scaly feels like it’s growing inside me. I’m a grade B 1950s horror movie,” she writes in one caption. In January, the five-time Tony-nominated playwright, popular performer and composer, and prolific writer, will bring her irresistible wit to MDSG in a lecture that promises to be both enlightening and entertaining.



## Lecture: Ask the Doctor— All Your Questions Answered

### Ivan Goldberg, MD

Eminent psychopharmacologist, faculty member emeritus of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, MDSG medical advisor

December 6, 2005

It’s true—the more you learn about the treatment of mood disorder, the medications, the side effects, the reams of research, the more questions you have. If you’re ready for the answers, be sure to attend this lecture. Ivan Goldberg, MDSG medical advisor, “Ask the Doctor” columnist, and author of the extensive Depression Central website for professionals and patients, is a walking encyclopedia about depression, manic depression, anxiety, and everything else. By popular demand, Dr. Goldberg is back and will spend his entire lecture fielding questions from the audience. Come prepared to ask away.



## Lecture: Social Security Disability and Mental Illness Sorting Out the Rules

### Marc Strauss, Esq.

Top attorney specializing in social security disability — February 7, 2006

SSI, SSD, DLA—what do all these confusing initials mean? When it comes to getting social security and disability benefits for depression and other mental illness, cutting through the red tape can be overwhelming. Come hear attorney Marc Strauss, who specializes in fighting the bureaucracy in this complicated area of law, give a broad overview of the system and the application process. He’ll also explain what to do if you’re denied benefits. “The process can be discouraging, but if people learn what to do and keep at it, they’ll get what they’re entitled to,” says Strauss.

### Inside...

Reader’s Corner: Nick Hornby  
Ask the Doctors: Risperdal for behavior disorders  
Plus mental health websites

# 'Tis the Season...of Giving

Dear Friends:

On the last page of every issue of this newsletter, we always tell you, "We get by with a little help from our friends." Well, we're not just saying so because we're Beatles fans.

It's true that running our support groups, publishing our newsletter and website, and booking top authorities for our lecture series are labors of love. But that doesn't mean operational expenses don't add up quickly. The contributions collected at meetings and lectures don't cover these costs—not by a long shot.

That's why we're asking for your help. By making a tax-deductible donation, you'll make it possible for our support groups and other services to continue to exist.

Your dollars pay for meeting space rental, literature publication, our website, and operational expenses that are critical to keeping MDSG afloat. So as you make your Christmas and Hanukkah lists this year, don't forget us. Please, be as generous as you can.



*Thanks and Happy Holidays from all of us at MDSG!*

Enclosed is my annual contribution to MDSG.

- \$500 Patron
- \$250 Benefactor
- \$100 Donor
- \$50 Friend
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other amount

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Mood Disorders Support Group  
New York

### MOODS

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All information in the newsletter is intended for general knowledge only and is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment for a specific medical condition.



**Attention Members:  
Lectures will take  
place on Tuesdays  
instead of Mondays  
from now on starting  
with our December  
lecture. See pages 1  
and 5 for details.**

## Ask the Doctors with Ivan Goldberg, Psychopharmacologist



**Q:** I have had many episodes of bipolar disorder with psychosis which lithium does a good job of preventing. I have taken lithium during each of my previous two pregnancies. Both of my children were born without any birth defects. I now have a new obstetrician who tells me that she does not wish me to continue lithium through my present pregnancy because of the danger to my baby. How should I manage my bipolar disorder during this pregnancy?

**A:** Managing bipolar disorder during pregnancy involves some hard choices. If a woman with a history of

bipolar disorder stops her mood stabilizers when she discovers she is pregnant, there is a good chance that she will soon have another episode of mania or depression. This risk is especially high in women who have had many and severe episodes.

At the same time, the use of any mood stabilizer during pregnancy involves some risk. With lithium, there is a approximately one chance in 1,000 of the baby being born with a serious, but usually correctable, cardiac malformation. Depakote (divalproex) and Tegretol (carbamazepine) are accompanied by an approximately 5 percent chance of serious central nervous

system malformations. Data is currently being collected regarding the safety during pregnancy of newer anticonvulsant mood stabilizers like Lamictal (lamotrigine).

During pregnancy there is usually a need for an increased dose of lithium, but in the week prior to delivery, the dose of lithium should be reduced to prevent lithium toxicity after delivery. A follow-up study of children who had been exposed to lithium in utero—done when the children were five years old—failed to detect any late-developing mental of physical abnormalities.

*Ask Doctor Goldberg a question in person in December! See pages 1 and 5 for details.*

## ...and Joe Nieder, Pediatric Psychiatrist

**Q:** Our 12-year-old son has been diagnosed with ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder, and depression. He seems to have stabilized (he's doing acceptably well in school and behaving within social norms) with treatment that includes antidepressants, ritalin, and risperdal. Before being medicated he had problems with impulse control and paying attention in school, and he had terrible temper tantrums when his routine was altered. The risperdal seems to control the tantrums, but my question is, why would this medication work for him? Information available on the internet indicates that it's used to treat people with schizophrenia.

**A:** In regard to your son's medications, while the ADHD medication and antidepressant are more commonly used to treat behavioral disorders in children, risperdal is also sometimes used for very severe behavior disorders even though it is FDA approved for schizophrenia.

This does not mean your child is psychotic or schizophrenic, it just means his doctor is using the drug in a way that differs from what it was originally approved for, a fairly common and generally acceptable practice called "off label" use. As far as side effects go, the major concerns are that it can elevate a hormone called prolactin (which can interfere with the onset of puberty) and can cause large weight gain in some children. These are effects your son's doctor should be on the look out for. The other concern is that it has not been studied for use over many years in children or adolescents. However, it is a very effective medication.

Since your son's problems are substantial for someone his age, though, I would also hope that his doctor or therapist explores any psychological factors that might be exacerbating them, such as family or marital problems, tension at home, etc. I would also look for a family history of any psychiatric disorder,

including ADHD, impulse disorders, episodic gambling or alcoholism, or any biologic history in relatives that would suggest a physiologic basis for the disorder. This can lead to a better understanding of the nature of your son's problem.

Because the problem is so extensive, I would also consider the possibility that he has a pervasive developmental disorder, or perhaps an early form of bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder can develop at this age, but does not appear in a classic adult bipolar pattern. For example, bipolar adolescents and children may have a more constant "mixed state" in which they are simultaneously irritated and excited rather than the mood swings most people associate with bipolar disorder. A family history of bipolar disorder would be suggestive of this. Establishing the correct diagnosis is important since treatment approaches do vary.



## The Reader's Corner with Betsy Naylor

### *A Long Way Down*

by Nick Hornby  
333 pp.  
Riverhead Books.  
\$24.95

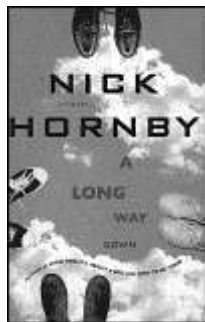
People who jump to their death prefer particular settings: Niagara Falls, the Brooklyn Bridge, the George Washington Bridge, the Golden Gate Bridge. In London the most popular place is a 15-story building called Toppers' House which is where Nick Hornby's latest novel. *A Long Way Down* opens on a New Years Eve. Four strangers have come to the roof interrupting each others' plans to jump. They are: Martin, a fired TV host, just out of jail; Maureen, a dowdy mother saddled with the full-time care for her disabled adult son; Jess, a raging, stoned teenager whose been stood up by a boy she adores, JJ, a musician who has just been kicked out of his band and dumped by his girlfriend.

As luck would have it, JJ is a pizza delivery man complete with pizza and the four potential jumpers, annoyed at not being able to commit suicide in privacy, are distracted enough to eat the pizza. Thus the characters set upon an unplanned journey. These four give words to their feelings: "The ledge felt

safe. There was no humiliation and shame there." "I can't get used to the idea that my life is finished, pointless, too hard, completely without hope or color." "Why is it easier to, like, leap into the void than to face what you've done?" "I can't see way forward or back."

Each comes to understand that no one but the other three has any idea how they feel. These alienated folks become a group of sorts, engaging in R-rated conversation. No one gives advice. No one asks for help and no one mentions therapy. To those of us well-versed in the "why" of behavior and depression their conversation may seem unsophisticated. However one of them has taken the Aaron T. Beck Suicide Potential Scale. The score was 21 out of 30, so high that this character felt justified in appearing on the roof.

I thought *A Long Way Down* would be a change of pace for this column since it's a novel. But these fictional people suffer in ways we in in MDSG will recognize. Their group helps and some of them come to profound insights about themselves and about life's unevenness and their evening together begins a unique support group. Amidst the fiction is so much truth. All this and funny, too.



### Book Bits

#### *When Nothing Matters Any-more: A survival guide for depressed teens*

by Bev Cobain,  
RNC Free Spirit, \$13.95

Cobain provides practical and to-the-point information for young people coming to the realization that they are depressed. Her book also includes help for those who are suicidal.

#### *Should You Leave? A Psychiatrist Explores Intimacy and Autonomy—and the Nature of Advice.*

by Peter D. Kramer, MD  
Schribner, \$25.0 (hardcover)

A famous psychiatrist examines contemporary relationships. His practice gives him an excellent view of what the struggles are.

#### *Undercurrents: A therapist's reckoning with depression.*

by Martha Manning, PhD  
Harper, \$20.00

A psychologist recognizes her own worsening depression. No treatment helps until she consents to ECT (shock treatment), which turns out to be vital to her recovery, and to her survival. —B.N.



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# Mood Disorders Support Groups and Lectures

## Winter 2005-2006

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### Support Groups

**Manhattan – West Side/Carnegie Hall**  
Every Wednesday

Doors open at 7:00pm, groups begin at 7:30pm **Jewish Board of Family and Children Services**,  
Third floor, 120 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street  
(between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenues, east of Carnegie Hall).

**Manhattan – East Side/Downtown**  
Every Friday

Doors open at 7:00pm, groups begin at 7:30pm,  
**Beth Israel Medical Center**, Bernstein Pavilion,  
2nd floor, Enter on Nathan Perlman Place  
(between 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> Sts and 1st & 2nd Avenues)

Support groups enable participants to share personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings in small confidential gatherings. Separate groups are available for newcomers, unipolar (depressive), bipolar (manic depressive), family members, and friends. At *both* locations, all groups meet at the same time, including the Under-30 Group. The support groups are free for members. A \$5 contribution is suggested for non-members.

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### Lectures

(now on Tuesdays)

December 6, 2005  
Tuesday-new day!

**Ivan Goldberg, MD**  
Psychopharmacologist, faculty member emeritus of Columbia University med school, MDSG medical advisor.

**Ask the Doctor: All Your Questions Answered**  
Back by popular demand, Dr. Goldberg, walking encyclopedia of mental health information, will spend his entire lecture fielding questions from the audience. Come prepared to ask away.

January, 10 2006  
Tuesday-new day!

**Elizabeth Swados**  
Obie-Award Winning Playwright, Guggenheim Fellow, and author the acclaimed *My Depression: A Picture Book*.

**Depression and Humor: Is There Such a Thing?**  
Swados, a five-time Tony-nominated playwright, popular performer and composer, and prolific writer, will bring her irresistible wit to MDSG.

February 7, 2006  
Tuesday-new day!

**Mark Strauss, Esq.**  
Top attorney specializing in social security disability.

**Social Security Disability and Mental Illness: Sorting Out the Rules** Cutting through the red tape is not impossible if you know what to do. Come hear Strauss give a broad overview of the system and the application process and explain what to do if you're denied benefits.

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Lectures are *usually* held on **Tuesdays** (call and listen to message for last minute changes). Doors open at 7:00 pm; lectures begin at 7:30 p.m. in Podell Auditorium, Dazion Pavillion, Beth Israel Medical Center (enter at northwest corner of 1st Avenue and 16th Street). Lectures are free for members. A \$5 contribution is suggested for non-members.

**Contact us for more information and a copy of our newsletter.**  
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## Knowledge is Power: Mental Health Resources on the Web

**S**earch the internet for information about mood disorders—or any health topic—and you're likely to come across all manner of sketchy material. At the same time, there are a plethora of useful sites for keeping up on the latest. As part of an ongoing series, here are some sites worth visiting.



includes articles from other sections. Recent stories have included a feature on whether brain imaging can be used in diagnosing depression, a book review that looks at the cultural context of sanity, and a news story on the FDA's warning regarding Paxil and pregnancy. The section is updated frequently. ([nytimes.com/pages/health/psychology/index.html](http://nytimes.com/pages/health/psychology/index.html))

A search of "bipolar," for instance retrieved, among other things, links to a list of NIH clinical trials on manic depression, a fact sheet from the American Psychiatric Association, and treatment guidelines from the Child and Adolescent Bipolar Foundation. ([nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus](http://nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus))

### **New York Times:**

#### **Mental Health and Behavior**

All of paper's recent stories about psychology and psychiatry are gathered into this single section online. The content draws heavily from the Tuesday Science section, but also

### **Medline Plus**

This search engine from the National Institutes of Health covers a wide range of health topics and can be used to search for reliable information on depression, bipolar disorder, suicide, therapies and medications.

### **Undoing Depression**

Noted psychologist and author Richard O'Connor maintains a website that is chock full of self-help information, some of it from his book, some of it in addition to it. Sections on support groups, parenting, divorce, and stress are included. ([undoingdepression.com](http://undoingdepression.com))

*continued, next page*

# Are you, or is someone close to you, currently depressed?

If you or someone you love is depressed and between the ages 18-65, you may be eligible for a state-of-the-art brain imaging study. We will provide up to 6 months of outpatient treatment for Unipolar and Bipolar Depression at no cost to the patient, **if eligible**. Inpatient treatment is also available.

For more information, please call:  
Sarah - (212) 543-5834

**New York State Psychiatric Institute**  
**Department of Neuroscience**  
**Principle Investigator: J. John Mann, M.D.**

**Depression and Bipolar****Support Alliance**

The website of DBSA, the national organization of which MDSG is a chapter, has mood disorder screening tests, a tool for finding support groups in other cities, advocacy updates, and a substantial amount of background information about mood disorders. (dbsalliance.org)

**Child and Adolescent****Bipolar Foundation**

CABF's website includes on online support groups, message boards, a

doctor finder, and detailed background information on bipolar disorder and how it affects kids. (bpkids.org)

**Anxiety Disorders****Association of America**

Generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, phobias, and post-traumatic stress disorder are all covered on this site. A special section on women's issues, a chart of anxiety medication, and advice on how to help a loved one who may have an anxiety disorder are among

some of the features included. (aada.org)

**Yahoo! News:****Mental Health News Stories**

Articles from a variety of sources are gathered and updated throughout the day. Recent examples include an item on St. John's wort from *The New Scientist*, a story on caffeine addiction from *National Geographic*, and an article from the *Washington Post* on antidepressants.

(news.yahoo.com/fc/health/mental\_health/news\_stories/)

## Archived Lectures Available by Mail

Did you miss a lecture of great interest to you? Recordings of past lectures are available through the mail. The most recent lectures (beginning with #47) are on cd; previous lectures are on cassette tape.

<u>Tape #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Subject</u>
52	11/7/05	John F. Clarkin, PhD	Talk Therapy for Mood Disorders* <b>NEW!</b>
51	10/10/05	James C.-Y. Chou MD	What is Standard Care, Best Care for Bipolar Disease* <b>NEW!</b>
50	9/12/05	Richard O'Connor, PhD	Self Destructive Behavior, Mood Disorders, and Stress* <b>NEW!</b>
49	6/13/05	Peter Kramer, MD	At Last—Confronting Depression*
48	5/2/05	Lois Kroplick, MD	Fresh Insights into Mood Disorders in Women*
47	4/4/05	Issie Greenberg, PhD	Obesity, Weight Control, and Psychiatric Meds*
46	3/7/05	Jack M. Gorman, MD	New Meds, Best Meds and What's in the Pipeline
45	1/10/05	Michael Terman, PhD	Light and Negative Air Ion Therapy for SAD, sub-SAD, Depression
44	12/6/04	Joseph Nieder, MD (moderator)	Panel: Antidepressant Medications for Children and Adolescents
43	11/1/04	Richard Rosenthal, MD	Mood Disorders and Substance Abuse
42	10/4/04	Frank M. Mondimore, MD	Bipolar and Unipolar Depression: Same or Different
41	9/13/04	Jon Freeman, PhD	Sleep Disorders and Mood Disorders
40	6/7/04	Richard O'Connor, PhD	The Perpetual Stress Response
39	5/3/04	Ivan Goldberg, MD	Ask the Doctor: The Latest Research Findings
38	4/12/04	Paul H. Wender MD	ADHD and Its Impact on Mood Disorders.
37	3/1/04	David P. Bernstein PhD	What's Personality Got To Do With It?
36	2/2/04	Anne Sheffield	Subject: Love, Sex, Relationships and Mood Disorders.
35	1/5/04	Donald F. Klein MD	What's Typical About Atypical Depression?
34	12/1/03	Panel of Employment Lawyers	Working the Workforce
33	11/3/03	Heidi Wehring Pharm D	Medications: Getting the Full Effect, Losing the Side Effects
32	10/13/03	Francis Mas MD	Identification and Treatment of Mixed States
31	9/8/03	Stephen J. Donovan MD	Anger, Irritability and Mood Disorders
30	6/2/03	Michael Craig Miller MD	The Latest in Mood Disorders
29	5/5/03	James J. Fyfe, PhD	Confrontations Between the Police and the Mentally Ill
28	4/7/03	David Hellerstein, MD	Ask the Psychiatrist Anything
27	3/3/03	Sarah H. Lisanby, MD	Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation and Mood Disorders
26	2/3/03	David J. Miklowitz, PhD	Can You Survive Bipolar Disorder?
25	1/6/03	Robert Cancro, MD	Different Types of Depression & Their Treatments

All lectures are available for \$13 each (including postage and handling) or \$25 for two, \$35 for three.

To order, write a letter requesting any lecture by number, *make check out to MDSG Inc.* and send to:  
**Lecture Recordings c/o MDSG PO Box 30377, New York, NY 10011**

\* available on cd

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**NEW YORK, NY 10011**

### **We Get By with a Little Help from our Friends . . .**

**MDSG** provides award-winning services to thousands of New Yorkers—over 600 individual support groups a year, the distinguished lecture series, our telephone information service, our website, this newsletter. And all at the lowest possible cost, through volunteers.

The \$5 contribution for meetings doesn't cover all our expenses. We need your help to pay the phone bill, print the newsletter, promote MDSG in the media, and meet other needs.

Annual membership is \$45 for individuals, \$65 for families. Your membership card is a free ticket to support groups and most lectures. Contributions are tax deductible.

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